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SERVICE NEWS

PUBLISHED BY THE SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The NEWS is intended to inform staff members of developments within the Service, and is not for distribution to others.

October 15, 1938

FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SCS

This month the Soil Conservation Service celebrates the fifth anniversary of its establishment in October 1933, as the Soil Erosion Service of the Department of the Interior.

Its objectives, as stated in its first annual report (for the fiscal year 1934), were:

(1) To demonstrate that the impoverishment and destruction of our remaining areas of good agricultural land by continuing erosion can be largely controlled;

(2) To lay the foundation for a permanent national erosion-control program of adequate scope to meet the acute land crisis created by wasteful methods of land utilization.

In March 1935, it was transferred to the Department of Agriculture, renamed the Soil Conservation Service, and given Bureau status. H. H. Bennett continued at its head.

At the close of the fiscal year 1938, the Service had 166 demonstration projects, covering 11,500,000 acres of private land, 111 of them on a maintenance basis. Sixty-one thousand farmers and ranchers were cooperators; and employees of the Service in Washington and the field, including the CCC Section, numbered more than 13,000. In CCC camps, some 60,000 enrollees were engaged in erosion-control work. Moreover, memoranda of understanding had been signed with 34 of the newly created soil conservation districts. Agreements had been signed covering erosion-control work on nearly 21,000,000 acres of public lands embraced in 9 project and camp areas. Treatment had been completed on nearly 3,000,000 acres of public lands.

During the past year, soil and water saving measures have spread faster and farther than in any previous year; and as the district

Benton, Miss Mildred

program gets under way, the Service expects that strip cropping, contour tillage, terracing, and use of winter cover will spread to sections of the country which the demonstration program has been unable to reach.

HURRICANE DAMAGE IN THE NORTHEAST

In an article appearing in "The New York Times" of September 27 under the heading "Farm Soil Losses in the Storm Huge," the Chief gave his first-hand impressions of the aftermath of last month's hurricane and floods in Region 1.

Mr. Bennett estimated that the damage to basic soil resources, exclusive of the ruination of current crops, would probably amount to millions of dollars. Raw subsoil is exposed in many localities, fresh gullies have appeared in farm fields, and crops are washed out or buried under silt and gravel, he said.

The Chief went on to state that soil conservation methods had been severely tested during five days of abnormal rainfall, and that farms where such methods were practiced had suffered slightly in comparison with those not so protected.

Near Hartford, Conn., Mr. Bennett saw a gully more than 1,000 feet long cut through a field of potatoes and tobacco, and judged that it represented the loss of at least 300 tons of topsoil. All unprotected fields in the localities he inspected showed similar destruction.

Going over the SCS project near Rockville, Conn., the Chief found that terraces, strip cropping, contour cultivation, cover crops, and reforestation of erodible slopes had so protected the lands of farmers participating in a cooperative demonstration of conservation practices, that soil losses were either negligible or non-existent. In New Jersey, where the SCS has three demonstration areas, Mr. Bennett discovered a corresponding contrast between losses suffered by protected and unprotected land.

The article was illustrated by photographs of the storm areas taken by R. A. Mawhinney, the Service's chief photographer.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE REORGANIZATION

On October 6, Secretary Wallace announced major changes in the structure of the Department of Agriculture designed to expedite the service of the Department to the public.

The section of the Secretary's memorandum to chiefs of bureaus and offices which relates directly to the Soil Conservation Service is as follows:

"Several important changes are being made in the administration of the physical land-use programs. The purpose is to consolidate in a single agency all erosion-control, flood-control, and related activities that involve actual physical work on individual farms, watersheds, and other areas. The operating phases of three such programs -- erosion control, water facilities, and the farm part of flood control -- are now administered by the Soil Conservation Service. By assigning also to the Soil Conservation Service for administration the action phase of the land-utilization program (including retirement and development of submarginal land) and of the farm forestry program, we make it possible for the farmer to work with a single representative of five closely related land-use programs entrusted to the Department by Congress. Further, coordination of the physical land-use adjustment and conservation work with that of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration is simplified."

The Secretary said that he would shortly provide for the announced administrative changes by beginning the issuance of appropriate administrative orders.

FLOOD INSPECTION IN VERMONT

E. R. Kinnear, of the Section of Flood Control Surveys, has gone to Burlington, Vt., to see how SCS work in the Winooski River area has withstood the recent hurricane and flood. Mr. Kinnear came to the Washington office last month from the Burlington project, where he was engaged in engineering work.

PLANNING TECHNICIANS CONFERENCE

Sponsored by the National Resources Committee, of which the Secretary of Agriculture is a member, a Planning Technicians Conference was held in Washington during the last two weeks of September.

The session devoted to water-resources planning heard A. L. Patrick, Chief of the Division of Watershed and Conservation Surveys, speak on the subject of flood control, and Assistant Chief D. S. Myer discuss water facilities programs. Dr. Patrick is a member of the Department of Agriculture's Flood Control Coordinating Committee, which is headed by A. C. Ringland, former Assistant to the Chief. On Thursday, September 22, when mapping and graphic presentation was the day's topic, J. M. Snyder, Head of the Cartographic Section,

discussed map and chart presentation and drawing. That afternoon, conferees visited the aerial photo mapping laboratory and drafting rooms of the SCS in the Printercraft Building.

NEWS OF DR. LOWDERMILK

The Chief has recently received two comprehensive letters from W. C. Lowdermilk, Chief of the Research Division, who sailed August 10 for a year's study of conservation methods in foreign countries.

Dr. Lowdermilk's first letter, sent from Edinburgh, Scotland, August 31, gave some impressions of agricultural problems and procedure in England gained at the Cambridge meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, the Agricultural, Geographical, and Geological Sections of which he attended.

The presidential address of Dr. R. A. Stapledon to the Agricultural Section, Dr. Lowdermilk said, deplored the tendency of farm youth to migrate to cities, thus leaving fields untilled and decreasing the country's food supply, 60 percent of which is now imported. A "back to the land" movement has been inaugurated which provides subsidies for agriculture in an effort to make England more self-sufficient as a war or self-defense measure. Soil erosion, Dr. Stapledon announced, is recognized in England as a world-wide problem, since it affects countries from which she is accustomed to obtain an abundant and cheap supply of food.

The requirements of British agriculture, according to Dr. Stapledon, are three: A large rural population, a large acreage in a constantly fertile and plowable condition, and a maximum of flexibility in commodity production.

Dr. Lowdermilk visited several Essex farms, which he reported as being well managed, with attention paid to rotation and manuring. Wheat yields, he said, were 30 or 40 bushels to the acre. The reforestation work in the Fen country, where wind erosion has affected the fine, sandy soils, he inspected before going to Harpenden, in Hertfordshire, where the Imperial Bureau of Soil Science, under the direction of Sir John Russell, has its Rothamsted Experimental Station.

Here he was impressed with the age of land use -- e.g., chalk pits 2,000 years old, used by the Belgae before Caesar landed in Britain, and field boundaries identical with those in use 1,000 years ago.

Dr. Lowdermilk's second letter, written at The Hague, Holland, September 17, told of his attendance at the annual field meeting of the soil surveyors of England, Wales, and Scotland at Crieff, Scotland.

Scotland suffers little danger from soil erosion because of the slow rate of decomposition of vegetative matter, though there has been considerable forest destruction, he observed. Many slopes formerly cultivated have been abandoned in favor of bottom lands, formerly sour moors, now made tillable by the introduction of drainage. One interesting part of the field trip was an inspection of a bog moor reclamation project.

The recent drought in England did not bring shortage of harvest, as might be expected, Dr. Lowdermilk was surprised to learn. Dry weather favors wheat production on the clay soils, and the country has enjoyed its best harvest in six years.

Before he left for Holland, Dr. Lowdermilk consulted with numerous officials of the Ministry of Agriculture in London.

CCC SAFETY RECORD

J. J. McEntee, Acting Director of the CCC, announces that an intensive safety campaign in the camps has brought about a 66 percent reduction in the monthly accident rate. Enrollees injured both on work projects and off duty or on leave of absence now number 8 per 1,000 as against a previous 17 per 1,000.

A handbook of regulations just issued by the CCC gives safety instructions and information covering all phases of camp work and recreation. O. B. Sandberg, technician in the Service's CCC Section, and M. H. Mills, safety engineer in the Division of Administration, assisted in the preparation of the handbook.

CCC CAMPS

The Service will direct the activities of 355 CCC camps during the next six months, according to H. D. Abbot, Head of the CCC Section. Camps are located in 38 States, both on SCS projects and in areas of their own.

AGRONOMY SECTION MEETING

A meeting of the regional agronomists and range examiners of the SCS will be held in Washington November 9-15. Further information about the meeting may be secured from C. R. Enlow, Head of the Section of Agronomy, Room 501, Standard Oil Building.

WATER RESOURCES CONFERENCE

R. H. Davis, Head of the Section of Flood Control Surveys, last week attended a Water Resources Conference at Austin, Tex., under the

auspices of the Texas Watersheds Association. "Water Conservation and Erosion Control" was the subject of his address to the conferees.

FISCAL MEETING

The Washington fiscal office held an accounts conference in Washington September 21-23, attended by the heads of the accounts units of the eleven regional offices, representatives of the Section of CCC Operations in Washington, and officials of the Washington fiscal office. Various SCS and CCC accounting procedures and problems were discussed.

The following field representatives attended the conference:

Wayne Brown, Region 1; H. B. Leach, Region 2; G. A. Aitken, Region 3; W. S. Ewers, Region 4; H. B. Fry, Region 5; H. C. Willis, Region 6; G. W. Dunn, Region 7; L. G. Mitchell, Region 8; Clyde Hart, Region 9; H. F. W. Poggenburg, Region 10; and E. A. Ronning, Region 11.

IMPRESSIONS OF A VISITOR

The following extracts are from a letter written to the Chief by H. R. Roberts, an engineer in the Department of Native Affairs, Union of South Africa, upon his return from a two and a half months' tour of soil conservation projects in the U. S.

"My itinerary comprised visits to projects in all regions except Nos. 1 and 9, and the programme has gone without a hitch, with the result that I have been enabled to see and learn a great deal which will be of assistance to us in our soil conservation work in South Africa.

"Without exception the officers of your Department have done their utmost to render every assistance in connection with the work and in addition many have extended hospitality to me in their private capacity.

"The outstanding impression of my visit is the way in which the subject, after the basic data regarding topography, soils, climate have been obtained, is approached by a team of technicians in order that all aspects of this complex problem may receive attention, due regard being had to economic considerations.

"Also in travelling through some parts of the country the spread of approved practices is becoming very noticeable."

PORTUGUESE VISITOR

Louis Bramao, who is connected with the Central Government at Lisbon, Portugal, was a recent visitor in the Research Division offices, where R. H. Uhland arranged to have him inspect the Service's hydraulic laboratory in the Bureau of Standards. Mr. Bramao has for some months been working with the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils.

"TO HOLD THIS SOIL"

Just off the press is Miscellaneous Publication No. 321 of the USDA, a 122-page bulletin entitled "To Hold This Soil," by Russell Lord, special writer for the SCS.

Mr. Lord traces soil wastage in the U. S. chronologically, from first settlement down to the present time, and geographically, from the east coast to the Pacific; and discusses remedial and preventive conservation measures so far inaugurated by the Service.

A detailed review of this bulletin will appear in the November issue of the magazine "Soil Conservation."

Soil conservation is likewise the topic of Mr. Lord's latest book, "Behold Our Land," the October selection of the Scientific Book Club.

LIBRARY INVENTORY

The Service library expects to take inventory during October. In order to facilitate this task, Mildred Benton, Librarian, requests that individuals having loan material in their possession which is not actually in use please return it to the library.

As it will be necessary to visit each office in order to check on library property sent there to file, it is suggested that some one person in each office be designated to assemble the books in one location. Such an arrangement will save time and avoid disturbance.

Due notice will be given of the intended visit by a library representative.

NOTES

Late in September, A. G. McCall, State research programs officer, and I. L. Hobson, Head of the Section of Cooperative Relations in Extension, went to Hartford, Conn., to meet State Coordinator J. A. Brenneman and J. P. Jones, Region 1 Conservator, and to travel with them to Amherst, Mass., where the State agricultural experiment station is located.

There they discussed with F. J. Sievers, Director of the Station, and W. A. Munson, in charge of the State's extension work, the revision of working plans for research projects and the development of further cooperative relations with the Extension Service in Massachusetts.

R. E. Uhland, liason officer for the Research and Operations Division, and W. F. Peel of the Operations staff, left last week for a fortnight's trip through Regions 5, 7, and 9. They expect to visit the three regional offices, inspect some of the work being done on project areas, and stop at several State experiment stations en route.

The development and improvement of working plans for evaluation surveys and field tests being conducted on various project areas will be discussed by Messrs. Uhland and Peel with regional and project personnel.

A. E. Brandt, statistical analyst in the Research Division, G. W. Musgrave, Head of the Section of Soil and Water Experiment Stations, and H. E. Middleton of the latter's staff attended a conference held September 21-24 at Columbia, Mo., in connection with the development of work plans for the experiment station at McCredie. Representatives from the Region 5 office and from the State experiment station also attended the meeting.

G. A. Barnes, Head of the Section of Information, left last week for the Pacific Coast via the Southwest. Mr. Barnes expected to spend a week each in Regions 8, 10, 11, and 9, but returned to Washington when the departmental reorganization was announced.

A conference held last week at Auburn, Ala., to plan for future cooperative research projects in that State was attended by A. E. Brandt, representing the Research Division. W. J. Simpson, Assistant State Coordinator, and E. C. Richardson, agronomist at the Dadeville project, were the other conferees.

N. R. Bear and J. S. Barnes, of the Division of Conservation Operations, spent part of last week in Fort Worth, Tex., where they discussed with the field staff questions connected with the development

of administrative procedure in the areal organization set-up in Region 4.

VISUAL INFORMATION OFFICE

H. G. Anthony, in charge of the Visual Information Unit of the Section of Information, has moved his office from the South Building to Room 512 Standard Oil Building. The telephone number -- 5139 -- is unchanged.

FOR THE INFORMATION OF TRAVELERS

Since misunderstanding occasionally arises with regard to the amount of per diem allowance which may be claimed under Government travel regulations, the fiscal office has supplied the following example of erroneous calculation of such allowance:

Mr. X arrived in Chicago early Wednesday morning en route to Washington from a western trip, and left on the B. & O's Capitol Limited at 3:30 P. M., arriving at 8:25 Thursday morning. In his expense account he credited himself with a half day's per diem allowance for Thursday, supposedly in accordance with the regulations, which permit one-quarter day's allowance for each six hours or fraction thereof spent in travel.

This half day was reduced to a quarter day by the fiscal office, because Mr. X could have taken another B. & O. train, the Shenandoah, which left Chicago at 10:00 A. M. Wednesday, arrived in Washington at 3:55 A. M. Thursday. Since in either case Mr. X was able to reach his desk by 9 A. M. Thursday, the choice of trains was discretionary with him, and his selection of the superior accommodation understandable. His error was in figuring his per diem on the time of arrival of the later train.

In other words, it is incumbent upon the traveler, under the regulations, to charge the government for nothing in excess of the most economical first-class method of travel, which in this case was an earlier train which would have cut in half the allowance for the travel day.

PENALTIES IMPOSED

We regret to report that it was necessary to terminate with prejudice two SCS employees recently. Both had made improper use of Government cars and property, and had appropriated for their personal use Government stamps, gasoline, auto parts and other property. They were not allowed any accrued or accumulated leave, were called upon to reimburse the Government in substantial amounts, and both have been indicted by Federal grand juries.

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